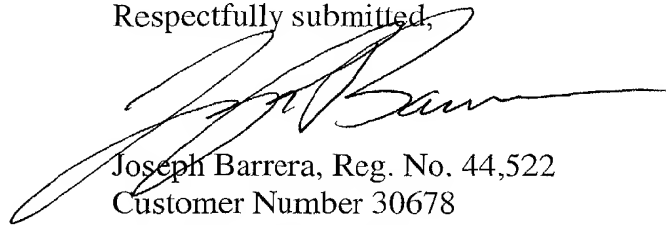


Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the specification and claims by this amendment. The attached page is captioned "Version with markings to show changes made." In the event the Examiner believes an interview might serve to advance the prosecution of this application in any way, the undersigned attorney is available at the telephone number noted below.

The Director is hereby authorized to charge any fees, or credit any overpayment, associated with this communication, including any extension fees, to CBLH Deposit Account No. 22-0185.

Respectfully submitted,



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Date: 4-26-02

Enclosure: Claims after Amendment

Version with markings to show changes made.

In the Claims:

Claims 1, 5-7 and 14 were amended as follows:

1. (Twice Amended) A method of qualitative and quantitative analysis of microbial population(s) comprising:

contacting microorganisms present in a sample with at least one specific probe to form a probe-target complex, wherein the specific probe recognizes a RNA target sequence under conditions favorable to *in situ* hybridization in whole cells,

extracting the hybridized specific probes [that are hybridized by separation] from their target by adding a denaturing agent to denature the probe-target complex, and

detecting the extracted probes and measuring the amount thereof or their respective amounts.

5. (Thrice-amended) [Method] A method according to Claim 3 wherein said specific or said universal probe is a rRNA-targeted probe.

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6. (Thrice-amended) A method according to Claim 1, [wherein] further comprising extracting said microorganisms in said sample [are extracted from said sample] by centrifugation.

7. (Twice-amended) A method according to Claim 1, wherein said contacting is performed [followed by] following fixation of said whole cells.

14. (Thrice-amended) A method according to Claim 1, wherein extracting of the hybridized probes includes [adding a denaturing agent to denature the probe-target complex, and] extracting at a temperature higher than the melting temperature of the specific probe under consideration.